

San Diego Thinks Green
Council President Scott Peters, First District
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April is “Earth Month” in the City of San Diego, in recognition of the worldwide campaign to protect and preserve our natural environment. This is a great opportunity to explore the ways in which the City strives to reduce its dependence on imported water and power, as well as the high standards the City sets for sustainable development and building in our community.

Recently, the City Council adopted the General Plan, a document that was drafted with years of input from over 250 public meetings. The General Plan is the visionary planning document for the City. It will guide us in how to improve our neighborhoods and control growth over the next several decades.

This City Council set the bar for environmental standards very high and, even up to the last minute I worked with representatives from the environmental community to improve upon the Plan’s environmental policies. As a result of these efforts, the General Plan includes policies to promote sustainable growth, address climate change, and maximize energy efficiency.

By 2030, all new residential and commercial buildings will achieve “net zero” energy consumption, meaning they will not increase the region’s demand for electric power. This builds upon the City’s success in encouraging “green” building through programs established by the City Council in the early 2000’s, including a program requiring City projects to meet the U.S. Green Building Council’s LEED silver standard for all new projects and any renovations over 5,000 square feet. These progressive policies make our city a national leader in sustainable development.

The City also leads our region in reducing the amount of waste going into local landfills and maximizing our waste stream through recycling and energy capture. In November of last year, the City Council passed an aggressive new recycling ordinance, mandating curbside recycling for multi-family units and the gathering of recyclables at city-permitted events. In December, we required the diversion of construction and demolition debris from the main landfill. Green waste is collected from certain parts of the city as part of a pilot program. It is diverted from the main landfill, the mulch and compost material is offered to the public, and the methane produced by decomposition is captured and reused for power. Methane is also captured from the Point Loma Wastewater Facility and the North City Water Reclamation Plant and used to power a cogeneration facility. These policies extend the life of our local landfills, protect our air and water and allow us to reduce our dependence on new resources by maximizing recyclable materials.

Given our low yearly rainfall totals and limited sources of fresh water within our region, water conservation and water reuse are vitally important elements of our environmental stewardship. The City joins the County Water Authority in promoting the “20 Gallon Challenge,” calling on residents to reduce their water use by 20 gallons per day. San

Diegans heeded the call, reducing their consumption in February by 17 percent over the previous year. In addition to the gray water recycling already in place at city-owned facilities and commercial and industrial areas, the Council voted last year to pursue a pilot water recycling program to reduce our reliance on imported water supplies and create a more sustainable, local water portfolio.

None of these programs would be successful without the support and participation of people like you, who make environmentally-friendly choices and support regional efforts to reduce our dependence on imported water and energy resources. I look forward to working with the community to find new ways to preserve and protect San Diego's precious natural environment.